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MRA-Mission in the Northern Countries.

The large Moral Re-Armament Mission, which visited 16 countries in Asia and Africa this summer, is now visiting the Northern capitals. The mission consists of 300 people from 28 different countries, among them the former Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Ole Bjørn Kraft, the Minister of Refugees from Western Germany Mr. Oberländer, a representative from the British Labour Party Mr. John Mc Govern, and a member of the Tunisian Government Mr. Mahmoud Masmoudi.

In Helsinki (Helsingfors), the first capital to be visited, the MRA-Mission was welcomed by the chairman of the Olympic committee General Martela, the Lord Mayor Mr. Eero Rydman, and Bishop Elis Gulin, Tampere (Tammerfors). Bishop Gulin stressed MRA's important contribution to Finland's strength during the War. President and Mrs. Paasikivi attended the first performance of Peter Howard's play "The Vanishing Island". A play, "Freedom", with an all-African cast was also given.

The purpose of the mission's visit to the Northern countries is to "cause a renaissance in Europe which will transform history". The mission continued to Stockholm at the invitation of a number of prominent men headed by the Minister of Church Affairs Mr. Ivar Persson. In his invitation the Minister characterized the world mission as "a remarkable initiative to create better international relations". "The Vanishing Island" and "Freedom" were acted here, too.

Before the middle of December the mission should also arrive in Oslo and Copenhagen.

Northern Sunday School Congress in Copenhagen.

A Danish invitation has been issued for a Northern Sunday School Congress to be held in Copenhagen next summer

from June 27th to July 1st. The Congress is expected to gather 4-500 Sunday School leaders and teachers.

DENMARK

One Week of Prayer Instead of Two.

The Ecumenical Council in Denmark has applied to the World Council of Churches asking this organization to reconsider the question of the two weeks of prayer having an ecumenical purpose. The first of these is the Evangelical Alliance's week of prayer in the first week of January, and the second the ecumenical week of prayer from January 18th - 25th.

Especially in Denmark, where there is a very close connection and co-operation between the Evangelical Alliance and the Joint Ecumenical Council, it is felt to be a difficulty that there are two weeks of prayer, each with its special arrangements. But realizing that the different character and the independent traditions of the two weeks make it difficult to merge them, the Council refrained from making such a proposal, merely requesting the World Council of Churches to consider the matter on an international basis and investigate the possibilities.

Letter of Condolence to the Patriarch in Istanbul.

At its first meeting after reports of the destruction of churches in Istanbul were published the Ecumenical Council in Denmark sent a message of condolence to the Head of the Greek-Orthodox Church, the Patriarch in Constantinople.

The letter, which is signed by the chairman of the Ecumenical Council Bishop H. Fuglsang-Damgaard, says:

"Deeply moved at the terrible destruction caused during the violent attacks on church buildings and institutions in Istanbul and with the most heartfelt sympathy for your sufferings, the Ecumenical Council in Denmark expresses its deepest sympathy and solidarity and sends brotherly greetings to all members of the stricken communities. Almighty God be with you and preserve your suffering church from further outrages in the future."

Another Woman Clergyman in the Danish Church?

There is every indication that another woman clergyman will be appointed in the Danish Lutheran National Church in the near future. Three women have already been ordained, one of them is now serving as pastor in a women's prison, one in a free congregation, and one in an ordinary living.

The rector in Skive, a town in Jutland, has been granted the right to have an assistant pastor because of his health, and has nominated a young woman Helga Jensen, who has taken her degree in divinity. The women's organisations in the town have applied to the parochial church council, the Bishop, and the Ministry of Church Affairs, supporting the idea of a woman clergyman in the town, which already has three male clergymen.

The Minister of Church Affairs Mrs. Bodil Koch has declared that since the Act admitting women to holy orders was passed some years ago, there is nothing to prevent the appointment of women pastors. However, it is not certain that the Bishop Christian Baun in the diocese of Viborg will perform the ordination as he feels serious misgivings regarding women pastors, and in that case she will be ordained by one of the other bishops, who will then also take over the episcopal supervision.

When the three other women pastors were ordained in 1948 there was quite a stir in the Danish Church, but since then the question has been allowed to rest.

Every 10th Living to be partially Bestowed by the Administration.

In the Danish Parliament the Minister of Church Affairs, Mrs. Bodil Koch has put forward a bill proposing that every 10th living should be partially bestowed by the administration, so that pastors abroad and others who find it difficult to get a living will have a better chance.

Until now the parochial church councils in most of the parishes have been free to choose from among the entire number of applicants, and if one of these was unanimously nominated, the Ministry was bound to appoint him. But the Bill proposes that in future for every 10th living the Ministry should have the right to point out six of the applicants among whom the parochial church council can then choose.

As far as can be seen, there will be a majority in favour of the new Bill.

Old Danish Church Customs Investigated.

In the course of its line of research the Danish National Museum has sent out questionnaires asking old people for information regarding old customs and traditions in church life, at church services, funerals, and other religious rites. Especial importance is attached to such customs as are now obsolete, but which old people still remember having seen.

The museum has already collected 12.000 reports of a similar kind from other spheres of cultural life.

FINLAND

K.A. Fagerholm to Join the Church?

The Social Democratic candidate for the Finnish Presidency, Mr. K.A. Fagerholm, who is chairman of Parliament, has announced that he intends to join the Church, should he be elected.

As mentioned in CN No. 8, voices have been raised in church circles in protest against the possibility that a man who is not a member of the Lutheran National Church should become President, thus gaining no small influence on the Church, e.g. through the appointment of bishops and the proposal of church bills in Parliament.

Mr. Fagerholm states in an interview with the Christian Social Democratic paper "Veljeys" that he left the Church in the 1920's when the Act on religious freedom was passed, because the Church and many of its servants were hostile to the Labour Movement, but that he had never agitated against the Church.

After much criticism of his position hehas been asked to rejoin the Church, but he has felt that it was not right to do so during the election campaign. However, he is convinced that the Head of the State should be a member of the Church before entering upon his duties.

This statement has been received with mixed feelings. Several Social Democratic papers have published it though without giving it prominence, and in certain Church quarters the objection has been raised that the statement is merely due to political reasons. But in other quarters it has been received with more understanding. Thus the Swedish church weekly "Församlingsbladet" points out that it would have been less honest if Fagerholm had joined the Church during the election campaign.

Kuopio's Cathedral Chapter Refusees to Ordain Woman.

A woman teacher of religion in Paltamo has applied to the Cathedral Chapter in Kuopio asking for ordination, but the application has been refused.

In its answer the Cathedral Chapter points out that Finnish Church laws do not provide for the ordination of women, and that possible legislation on this point cannot be enacted by the Chapter, but only by the Synod. It is added that, in the opinion of the Cathedral Chapter, women in orders are contrary to the traditions of the Church and to the New Testament, and several Scripture passages are quoted. The Chapter is bound by the law of the Church and the Bible, and hence the application must be refused.

This has revived the old discussion about the ordination of women in Finland. It has made headlines in the papers, given rise to letters to the editors, leading articles and interviews, and even in the radio the question has been hotly debated and very different viewpoints have been advanced.

The Church paper "Kotimaa" does not feel that the Chapter can be blamed for its attitude. Among many others a bishop has asserted that the problem cannot be solved by quoting Scripture. Miss Liisa Riippa, as the applicant is called, asks in an interview: "Are we better interpreters of the Bible than other nations willing to ordain women?"

The entire question is being taken up in a committee appointed by the synod of 1954, which is to report to the next synod.

The Church is Contacting the Factories.

The Church is contacting the factories in our country, Bishop G.O. Rosenqvist said recently in a lecture to the

workers' institute in Borgå. The opposition between the Church and the Labour Movement is now rapidly becoming history.

The Bishop characterized the materialistic bias of Socialism as understandable in view of the conditions prevailing when it arose. At that time resolute action in the material sphere was necessary, but the Bishop felt that the time may come, has perhaps even arrived, when the leaders of the Labour Movement will realize that their most profound motives and aims are wholly accordant with those of Christianity.

The Bishop described the decisive modification of the programme of Social Democracy which has been concomitant with a deepening social consciousness within the Church, expressed in more extensive welfare work and the appointment of clergymen with special duties among labour groups, etc. Something new is developing, said the Bishop. The far too individualistic revivalist piety is now being replaced by a "social Christianity" which is steadily growing stronger. The Church is going to the factory, and the factory wants the Church to come. Today man has begun to realize his own poverty, and after vain attempts to fill the void with substitutes he finds the way to the well of water. It is then the duty of the Church to keep the way open and to see that the water in the well remains fresh.

At a meeting in Lahti the same question was dealt with by the Secretary General of the Central League of Finnish Trade Unions Mr. Olavi Lindblom and Bishop Elis Gulin, Tampere (Tammerfors). The former maintained that still existing conflicts between the Church and the Labour Movement can be removed. The Bishop emphasized that when the Church seeks to establish contact with the workers, it is not due to cold calculation, but to obedience to the New Testament and Christ. He expressed the wish that they might work together towards the common goal of bringing the people to the light and creating a righteous community.

Male Nurses in the Finnish Church Again.

In the last few year no male nurses have been trained in the Finnish Church. Hence it was an important event when Bishop Eino Sormunen, Kuopio, recently consecrated six male nurses as well as four deaconesses for welfare work in the Church.

The six male nurses have been given two years of training at the Church institute at Järvenpää, and in connection with this they have received practical training at the Church institute at Järvenpää.

In an interview Bishop Sormunen pointed out that new social conditions, largely due to industrialization, make such demands on Christian welfare work that it is necessary to have male nurses as well as deaconesses. "A belief of the early Christian Church is realized in our National Church when man and woman once more stand side by side in a service of love".

Väinö Linna on God and Civilization.

The Finnish author Väinö Linna, who has become famous for his novel "Unknown Soldier", recently made a speech together with the Nobel prize winner Dr. F.E. Sillanpää at a literary evening in Gamla Kyrkan (the Old Church) in Helsinki (Helsingfors).

Väinö Linna said: "A man's view of life may be ever so far from God, even atheistic; nevertheless there must be a living relation between him and God, because He is always active. And since He is the heart of our civilization, a view of civilization can only be gained through Him."

Japanese Pastor Invited to Finland.

Lutherska Evangeliiförsamlingen (the Lutheran Gospel Society) in Finland has invited a Lutheran Japanese pastor Rev. Seigero Ushinaru from Tokio to spend some time in Finland studying church life and learning the Finnish language in order to widen the contact between the churches of Japan and Finland.

Colour Film on Finland's Church.

At the initiative of the Finnish Foreign Ministry a colour film of the Finnish Church through the ages has been taken. The film shows a number of typical church buildings from various periods, beginning with the stone churches on Åland from the early Middle Ages. The film is to be provided with English, German, French, and probably also Spanish text.

ICELAND

Well-known Icelandic Pastor Dies.

The old Icelandic giants fall at last. Recently Sira Matthias Eggertsson died, 90 years old. He was the nephew of Iceland's famous poet, Sira Matthias Jochumsson, who for the millennial in 1874 wrote the Icelandic national anthem: "O, Gud vors land" (O, God our country), the only national anthem in the world which is a Christian hymn. It was sung in Reykjavik Cathedral at three special services on August 2nd, 1874. The old pastor was ordained on September 30th, 1888 by the Bishop of Iceland, Dr. Pjetur Pjetursson, who ordained 142 pastors, and he was the last of these.

NORWAY

Laymen Mobilized in Evanglization Campaign.

Seven congregations in Oslo and seventeen congregations in Østfold, a district east of the capital, have recently made an evangelization campaign, during which 40.000 families have been visited in one week by laymen from the congregations. The 1.200 laymen, about 50 from each congregation, had been given special training. They went from door to door bringing

a greeting from the congregation and an invitation to the church, where an evangelistic meeting was held every day for a week.

The campaign was very successful. In over 90 o/o of the homes the church representatives were well received, and many rejoiced at this personal contact with the congregation. Many of the churches were crowded at the evangelistic meetings, and all the congregations greeted hundreds of listeners who had not been to church for years. The last Sunday of the campaign many new children came to the Sunday Schools, and new members joined Bible study groups and other church societies in the congregations.

The campaign was largely modelled on similar campaigns in the Lutheran churches of America. Two pastors from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in USA, Dr. Oscar Hanson and Mr. Tanner, took part in the campaign giving a course of instruction for the pastors in the congregations every forenoon during campaign week.

In view of the good results in Oslo and Østfold similar campaigns are now being planned for several other cities and country districts. Evaluating the campaign Bishop Johannes Smemo, Oslo, said: "It has been quite an experience for me to see the joy of the laymen who took part. In the beginning they were surprised and happy to see how easy it was to work on these lines, but at bottom they rejoiced at the opportunity to witness, happy in serving as God's children."

Sober Evaluation of Billy Graham Meeting.

Of the 700 who came forward at the Billy Graham meeting in Oslo in July, 500 were "old Christians," says an analysis of the "decision-cards" and of the follow-up work published in "Vår Kirke". About 200 of those who handed in cards at the meeting, at which 35.000 people were present, did, however, take a decision for Christ that day.

"Vår Kirke" points out that the follow-up work has failed to a great extent in the congregations. After the meeting the congregations which the 700 wished to join were informed of their intentions, but only 400 of them have since been visited by the pastor of the congregation. "Three months afterwards there is nothing to show that Billy Graham's meetings have had any effect on church attendance or Christian activity in Oslo", the paper states. However, it points out the positive results of Billy Graham's visit in other ways. "Innumerable people afterwards admitted that the Christian problems, they had dismissed as being of no interest to them any longer, had taken on new meaning. The Graham-meeting also taught us something about the importance of careful preparation and of the power of advertising. But the greatest benefit was perhaps reaped by those who took part in the active work of preparation, especially the 700 spiritual guides for whom an excellent course was arranged. The frictionless cooperation between the churches is a spiritual capital for us all", the paper writes.

Translation of the Acts for Young People.

The Norwegian Bible Society has now published the Acts of the Apostles in a translation for young people. In Norway, as elsewhere, the authorized translation of the Bible has been criticized as being too heavy and difficult for young people.

A couple of years ago the Bible Society published the Gospel of St. Mark in a new translation, printed in a magazine size edition for sale at newspaper stands. Especially the format gave rise to criticism. "The Bible should not lie around in the homes like a magazine." For this reason the Acts has been published in usual book size, but the verses are only indicated in the margin and the text is divided by headings.

In the course of the next year the entire New Testament is to appear in a similar translation for young people, and at the same time work has begun on a new authorized version.

New Dean in Oslo.

As the new Dean in Oslo the Government has appointed Dr. Tord Godal. The new Dean is 46 years old and was the youngest of the applicants. In an interview he emphasizes that the greatest opportunity of the Church to-day lies in contacting laymen outside the Church. "We have tended to stand at the Church door without going beyond. On the social front we have established a good contact, and this is important, but I feel that we have neglected the cultural front, a contact which is essential to the Church if it wishes to have any influence in this field. We must make use of the opportunities we have to establish contact with lay forces in the various sections of social life."

Parliament Decides: School Teachers Need not Belong to State Church.

The Norwegian Parliament has decided by a small majority consisting of the Labour Party and the Communists to give the two Chambers the right to grant dispensation from the law demanding that all headmasters of secondary schools and teachers' colleges should be members of the National Church. The dispensation may be given in special cases and in cases where those in question will not have to teach religion.

The minority, the parties in opposition, were also willing that dispensation should be granted, but only "when this could be done without misgivings as to the Christian education which is the aim of the school", which was interpreted to mean that dispensation could only be granted to members of the Free Churches.

The new law introduced after the Government had appointed a man who is not a member of any church as headmaster of a teachers' college.

The Jesuit-paragraph under Re-newed Fire.

The Jesuit-paragraph in the Norwegian constitution, which denies Jesuits access to the kingdom, has once again been

sharply attacked in the press and in Parliament. The occasion was that a Danish Jesuit Father was granted special permission to come to Oslo in order to lecture, but refused on account of the "offensive conditions" under which the permission was granted. Father Henrik Roos waw invited by Catholic Forum in Oslo to speak on Søren Kierkegaard. The Minister of Justice Jens Hauge granted permission, but on the condition "that Father Roos was not to propagandize for Jesuitism, that he left the country immediately after his lecture, and reported his arrival and departure to the police authorities."

In Parliament the Minister of Justice stated that though it has been proposed to abolish the paragraph, this cannot influence the interpretation of it.

A similar invitation was extended to Father Roos last year asking him to lecture in Oslo on "The Jesuits", but then his application for entry was refused. In Parliament it is now demanded that the proposal to abolish the paragraph should be debated. It has been lying on the table of the Constitutional Committee for a year and a half. It will probably be discussed in Parliament before Christmas, but it is not certain that it will obtain the two thirds majority required for abolishing the old paragraph.

SWEDEN

Investigation of Women's Interest in Religion.

The Swedish Institute for the Investigation of Public Opinion is at present making a comprehensive study of the Swedish people's interest in religion and of their relation to the Church. The section dealing with women was recently published and it shows that interest in religion increases with age. About 8 o/o of those who were questioned between the ages of 18 and 36 said that they were deeply interested in religious matters, and the percentage increases with age until 20 o/o of those between 49 and 55 answered the question in the affirmative. On an average 12 o/o of the women say that they are interested in religion.

17 o/o answered Yes and 3 o/o No to all four of the following questions: Do you believe in a God who rules the world? - Do you believe in a God who interferes in your personal life? - Do you believe that those who believe in God will go to heaven when they die? - Do you try to be a real Christian?

The percentage of affirmative replies to each of the above questions was 72, 57, 35, and 36 respectively, and the percentage of negative replies was 7, 14, 20, and 36.

22 o/o of the women had been to church at least once in the last 4 weeks, 15 o/o of these had been to a service in the Lutheran National Church, and 7 o/o to a service in the Free Churches. 9 o/o had been to at least two services during this period, and of these 5 o/o had been to the National

Church, and 4 o/o to a Free Church.

There is a characteristic difference in church attendance in various parts of Sweden. Stockholm has the lowest percentage with only 6 o/o of the women, equally divided between the National Church and the Free Churches, and Eastern part of Middle Sweden the highest with 32 o/o, also equally divided between the National Church and the Free Churches. In the large cities as a whole a slightly larger percentage of women go to the National Church than to the Free Churches, in the other towns only about half as many, while in the country there are double as many.

Not Church Uniformity, but a Limited Cooperation.

One of the Swedish Free Church leaders, Dr. Ivar Wennfors, who belongs to the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, has written an article in the daily "Svenska Morgonbladet" describing his view on the relations between the Lutheran National Church and the Free Churches in such a way that it probably gives a good picture of the attitude in wide Free Church circles. Dr. Wennfors' article is a contribution to the debate opened by Professor Gustaf Wingren (see CN No. 6).

Dr. Wennfors does not feel that the Free Churches can be reproached for holding communion in their congregations as though by doing so they destroyed "the unity of the community table". Communion is a congregational meal and as such has its place in the fellowship of the congregation. Nor can the Free Churches be reproached with having founded a congregation within an already existing congregation, as they attempt to bring the Gospel to people who are as yet not believers. Dr. Wennfors concludes by pointing out that ecumenicity does not mean a struggle for church uniformity, but practical cooperation in solving limited problems.

There has also been a debate in Sweden on the relation between service in the National Church and the Free Churches. Bishop John Cullberg in Västerås suggested recently that services in Free Churches in the country, which are situated in the immediate vicinity of a church belonging to the National Church should be held whenever possible in the afternoon or evening, whereas the National Church should hold its services in the morning so that simultaneous services do not give rise to discord and irritation. However, this proposal was not received with any great enthusiasm in Free Church circles where it is pointed out that mutual consideration must be shown on this point if the change is to be introduced.

Interesting Poll on Youth Habits.

The Swedish Institute for the Investigation of Public Opinion has put a number of interesting questions to Swedish mothers with regard to how they bring up their children. The results show that in the great majority of homes young people between 15 and 18 are forbidden to play cards for money, drink, smoke, and use bad language, whereas they have no objections to letting them go out and dance. Card playing for money is forbidden to 93 o/o of the girls, and 53 o/o of the boys, bad

language to 76 o/o of the girls and 62 o/o of the boys. 24 o/o of the girls and 14 o/o of the boys are not allowed to dance outside the homes.

Swedish Revivalist Team to Three Scandinavian Capitals.

The famous Swedish inter-denominational AKO-team, which has held five large revivalist campaigns in various Swedish towns, is already booked a year ahead with campaigns in six new towns. The team has also been invited to visit Copenhagen, and similar invitations from Oslo and Stockholm have also been received.

The Evangelical Alliance Invited Billy Graham.

The Swedish branch of the Evangelical Alliance has invited Billy Graham for a three-week revivalist campaign in Sweden in 1956 or 1957, but as yet no promise has been made, it was stated at the annual conference of the Evangelical Alliance in Stockholm recently. Rev. Joh. Gustafsson was elected chairman.

More Friction between State and National Church.

"If it is the Government's intention to obstruct church work in the new suburbs, it is perfectly clear to me that the time has now come when we must begin to work for the separation of Church and State", said Bishop Bo Giertz, Göteborg (Gothenburg), commenting onthe Government's refusal to approve the establishment of a new curacy in a new parish in Göteborg (Gothenburg), where the population is rapidly growing. At present the parish has only one permanent pastor though it has 12.000 inhabitants and is expected to increase to 20 000 in the near future. The application had been recommended by all the church authorities, and the refusal is particularly difficult to understand, seeing that the curate's stipend was not to be paid by the State, but from local church funds.

"Svenska Dagbladet", which is generally friendly in its attitude to the Church, as well as "Svensk Kyrkotidning", the Pastors' Association's weekly, agree with the Bishop that the refusal seems to be an indication of a most regrettable development in the relation between State and Church.

Better Training for Sunday School Teachers.

The Swedish Sunday School Committee has made out a "model plan" for the training of Sunday school teachers. The teachers are to take part in study circles and it is hoped that the different denominations will participate on an ecumenical basis. The model plan consists of an elementary course with continuation courses, and the following subjects will be taught: pedagogics, child psychology, Sunday school knowledge, knowledge of the Bible, dogmatics, and the study of Palestine at the time of Christ.